

KAAI
THEATER

BRUSSELS,
DANCE 

NATURE THEATER OF OKLAHOMA
& ENKNAPGROUP
Pursuit of Happiness

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theatre/dance • 115 min. • in English

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

nl/ Volgens de Amerikaanse onafhankelijkheidsverklaring is het nastreven van geluk – *the pursuit of happiness* – één van de drie grondrechten waar ieder van ons mee geboren wordt. Maar wat is geluk? In welke donkere en afgelegen hoeken moeten we ons individueel én collectief begeven om het te vinden? Zou het – even verrassend als ongepast – de finale van een Hollywood blockbuster kunnen zijn? Pavol Liska en Kelly Copper gingen een jaar lang aan de slag met de EnKnapGroup. Dit internationaal dansgezelschap uit Ljubljana brengt voor de eerste keer ook tekst, in plaats van enkel te dansen. Samen creëren ze een bizarre en pijnlijke horrorkomedie over de expansiedrift in het Wilde Westen – en al het geweld dat daarbij kwam kijken.

- Het New Yorkse Nature Theater of Oklahoma verwierf wereldfaam met epische voorstellingen zoals *No Dice* en *Life & Times 1-8*, en is sinds 2008 een vaste waarde in het Kaaitheater-programma.

fr/ Selon la Déclaration d'Indépendance des États-Unis, la recherche du bonheur – *the pursuit of happiness* – est un des trois droits inaliénables inhérents à chaque être humain, dès qu'il voit le jour. Mais qu'est donc le bonheur ? Dans quels recoins obscurs et reculés faut-il se rendre individuellement et collectivement pour le trouver ? Pourrait-ce être, de manière aussi surprenante qu'inappropriée, l'épilogue d'une superproduction hollywoodienne ? Pavol Liska et Kelly Copper ont travaillé un an durant avec la compagnie de danse internationale de Ljubljana, EnKnapGroup, qui interprète pour la première fois un spectacle avec du texte et pas uniquement de la danse. Ensemble, ils créent une comédie d'épouvante bizarre et poignante sur la conquête de l'Ouest – et toute la violence qui est allée de pair.

- La compagnie de théâtre new-yorkaise Nature Theater of Oklahoma s'est forgé une réputation internationale avec ses spectacles épiques comme, entre autres, *No Dice* et *Life & Times 1-8*. Depuis 2008, NTO représente une valeur sûre de la programmation du Kaaitheater.

en/ According to the American Declaration of Independence, the pursuit of happiness is one of the three inalienable rights with which we are all imbued at birth. But what is happiness? In what dark and remote corners do we have to crawl individually and collectively to find it? Could it be the end of a Hollywood blockbuster, however surprising and inappropriate? Pavol Liska and Kelly Copper spent a year working with the EnKnapGroup, an international dance company from Ljubljana, which is performing with text for the first time, rather than only dancing. Together, they have created a bizarre and painful horror comedy about voracious expansion in the Wild West and all the violence that ensued as a result.

- The New York-based Nature Theater of Oklahoma acquired global fame with epic performances like *No Dice* and *Life & Times 1-8*, and since 2008 they have been a regular fixture on the Kaaitheater programme.

A FEW NOTES ON THE WORKING PROCESS OF *PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS*

by Pavol Liska & Kelly Copper

When we started over a year ago, working on this project with EnKnap, we came with just an old 1939 vintage book of cowboy dances in our hands, and an inclination to work on something 'American' from the distant vantage point of Slovenia.

The piece has evolved, since then. We've made *Pursuit of Happiness* over the course of a remarkably turbulent year, not only in America, but throughout the world – a year where guns and freedom and foreign policy have all been at issue – as well as happiness and who can have it and at what cost.

At times working on this project has felt like making a manifesto; at times, making a monster. We've worked in anger and in heartbreak and in hope – but also very much in friendship and in gratitude. Most especially we'd like to thank everyone at Spancki Borci and EnKnap; and, in particular the performers: Luke, Anna, Bence, Ida, Lada and Jeffrey, for their generosity and patience and friendship.

'America, as a social and political organization, is committed to a cheerful view of life. It could not be otherwise... Modern equalitarian societies... whether democratic or authoritarian in their political forms, always base themselves on the claim that they are making life happier... Happiness thus becomes the chief political issue – in a sense, the only political issue.'

– Robert Warshow, from *The Gangster As Tragic Hero*

'The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats...'

'Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?'

– Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience and Other Essays*

'Why does the Western movie especially have such a hold on our imagination? Chiefly, I think, because it offers a serious orientation to the problem of violence such as can be found almost nowhere else in our culture. One of the well-known peculiarities of modern civilized opinion is its refusal to acknowledge the value of violence. This refusal is a virtue, but like many virtues it involves a certain willful blindness and it encourages hypocrisy. We train ourselves to be shocked or bored by cultural images of violence, and our very concept of heroism tends to be a passive one. We are less drawn to the brave young men and women who kill large numbers of our enemies than to the heroic prisoners who endure torture without capitulating.... in war movies, to be sure, it is possible to present the uses of violence within a framework of responsibility. But there is the disadvantage that modern war is a co-operative enterprise; its violence is largely impersonal...'

– Robert Warshow, *The Westerner*

credits

written and directed by Pavol Liska, Kelly Copper | **performed by** EnKnapGroup: Ida Hellsten (Sweden), Bence Mezei (Hungary), Lada Petrovski Ternovšek (Croatia), Jeffrey Schoenaers (Belgium), Ana Štefanec Knez (Slovenia), Gilles Noël (Belgium) | **production** EN-KNAP Productions | **co-production** Théâtre de la Ville, steirischer herbst | **lighting design** Luka Curk | **costume design** Katarina Škaper | **costumes by** Atelje d.o.o. | **rehearsal director for** EnKnapGroup Nohemi Barriuso | **stage manager** Luka Curk | **technical realization** Španski Borci/EN-KNAP Technical Team | **photography and video** Andrej Lamut | **executive producer** Karmen Keržar | **public relations and editing** Nina Smerkol | Španski Borci Cultural Centre Director, EN-KNAP Productions - Programme Manager and Head of Productions Marjeta Lavrič | EN-KNAP Productions Managing Director, Španski Borci Cultural Centre Artistic Director Iztok Kovač | **supported by** The U.S. Embassy in Ljubljana The programme of EN-KNAP Productions is **financially supported by** City of Ljubljana – Department of Culture and Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia

